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AN ESSAY ON THE CHARACTER OF METHODISM:

IN WHICH

The leading Principles of that Sect: the Aids it has borrowed from the Writings of the Clergy, and the Influence it has communicated to them, are conſidered and ſtated.

By the Author of Remarks on Dr. HALLIFAX's Preface to the Sermons of the late Dr. OGDEN.

Tros, Rutuluſvè fuat, nullo diſcrimine habebo.
VIRG.

From the groſſneſs of its ſuperſtitions we may infer the ignorance of an age, but never ſhould pronounce concerning THE FOLLY OF AN INDIVIDUAL from his admitting popular Errors, conſecrated with the appearance of religion.
HUME.

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MDCCLXXXI.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

CHARACTER OF METHODISM.

IF the Queſtion between Dr. HALLIFAX and Mr. MAINWARING had turned upon a mere point of Criticiſm, the world would never have been troubled either with this, or my former publication; which, although it has a caſt of earneſtneſs, was not dictated by an attachment to the Perſon, or Opinions of any individual. The *Re-*

marks indeed were a ſhort, and haſty performance, conſiſting of ſuch looſe, indigeſted reflexions, as immediately occurred on reading the Preface by Dr. H. If ever noticed at all, they probably, by this time, may be quite forgotten. And though I dare not flatter myſelf, that a wider view, and fuller diſcuſſion of the ſame ſubject is likely to furniſh the Reader with entertainment, or amuſement; yet information at leaſt I will hope to afford him—information too, reſpecting particulars, in which every man, who feels, hath his ſhare of intereſt, and all, who think, muſt have ſome curioſity. On this ground it is, and on no other, that I intreat his attention to the following Conſiderations on the Nature of ENTHUSIASM: the Origin of SECTS: the peculiar Genius of METHODISM: the Aids

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it has borrowed from the Writings of the Clergy at large: and the Influence, in return, it has communicated to them.

Persons of a lively imagination, and ſtrong ſenſibility, have been ſo much affected on ſurveying the evils of civilized life, that, unmindful of its many advantages and bleſſings, they have almoſt envied that claſs of men, whoſe lot hath fallen amidſt unfrequented mountains, or wild and lonely foreſts. In opulent ſtates and flouriſhing communities the greateſt corruptions muſt ever be expected. Yet ſuch a picture of human life in its higheſt cultivation may well ſhock a ſerious and attentive obſerver. He regrets the loſs of that ſimplicity, which diſtinguiſhed the earlier ages, when arts were few, and innocence was ſecure, and virtue in eſteem. But an honeſt and

brave man will not content himſelf with barely lamenting the depraved morals of his own community. He ſees the neceſſity of ſome reformation, and, under this conviction, he forms ſome plan for effecting it. In order to arreſt the courſe of thoſe irregularities, which menace with equal ruin both nations and individuals, he tries the united force of advice, authority, and example. He reſolves to frame his own life by a ſeverer rule, than the temper of men in general, or the condition of ſocial intercourſe can perhaps admit of: and attributes to the rule divinely preſcribed a rigour, in ſome inſtances, greater than really belongs to it. All this is quite natural, and the conduct of ſuch a perſon, though not the moſt prudent, is more to be admired than cenſured when we know his integrity. But honeſty is ſo far from being a ſecu-

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rity againſt *Enthuſiaſm*, that it frequently leads men into it: and the mind begins to be enthuſiaſtic, the moment *error* or exceſs mixes itſelf with the warmer affections of the religious kind; whether that error reſpect the great object of all religion; or the nature, extent, and application of particular duties. The *purity* of this paſſion is a diſtinct conſideration; and can only be eſtimated by finding out, what ſeldom can be known exactly, how far ſingularity, or the love of novelty: in what degree intereſt, pride, or vainglory are, or are not, concerned.

The obſcureſt part in the hiſtory of the Chriſtian Church is the account of thoſe numerous Sects, which ſprung up in the earlier periods of its exiſtence; in the ages of its greateſt purity, and moſt adverſe fortune, as well as in thoſe of its

greateſt proſperity and corruption. The cauſes of that obſcurity are partly the want of materials in times ſo remote; and partly the inexplicable inconſiſtence and extravagance of the notions maintained. But after the revival of Letters, and the grand ſeparation from the Romiſh Communion, the various opinions which divided its opponents furniſhed ample matter for learned diſputation. And from a view of thoſe conteſts it is ſufficiently clear, that all the parties engaged were tinctured more or leſs with the ſame ſpirit of bigotry, and enthuſiaſm.

HAVING premiſed thus much concerning SECTS in general, let us now take a ſhort review of that among our own, which is more immediately the ſubject of our preſent inquiry.

THIS

THIS *Sect*, like moſt others, ſets up a claim to ſuperior ſanctity, and profeſſes, as its title imports, a more than ordinary ſeverity of life and manners.

Pure METHODISM, as it ſubſiſted under its founder, WHITFIELD, and ſome of his immediate followers, as far as ſuch a Scheme is capable of deſcription, ſeems to place Religion wholly, or chiefly, in certain inexplicable impulſes, or movements of the mind; and requires of its votaries to commit themſelves to the guidance of the Spirit, with an utter contempt of reaſon, and all human learning.

To *argue* with ſuch perſons would be fruitleſs labor. To attack them in the way of wit and ridicule, as ſome have done with great advantage is, I think, improper. For, amidſt all their extra-

vagance, ſome of them, at leaſt may be very ſincere. And that veneration, which is due to religion is never more endangered, than when religious errors are expoſed in a ludicrous way. Perſons of a thoughtful and delicate turn are ſhocked at ſuch levity. Thoſe of a contrary caſt are confirmed in their indifference and inſenſibility; while the deluded Objects of ſuch raillery are irritated, inſtead of being reclaimed. Beſides, to attack errors of a certain ſort, is to give them conſequence. Better leave it to time and chance, and the egregious folly of their own ſupporters, to conſign them to oblivion.

But there is another ſort of Methodism, with is better entitled to our attention; and I think it may not improperly be called the *mixed*, and *temperate*.

Each,

Each, without doubt, is hurtful in its way; but by far the greateſt danger is to be apprehended from the latter; which, amidſt all its abſurdities, carries with it ſome ſemblance of reaſon, and ſome ſhew of ſcience *: which doth not directly and

* In queſtions, which are purely metaphyſical, it is impoſſible to avoid the uſe of metaphyſical terms, or even the ſubtilties of abſtruſe reaſoning. But in all ſciences there is a way of uſing terms, which tends only to embarraſs a queſtion; as alſo there are methods of arguing, which, though ſpecious and impoſing, are found, on a ſtrict examination, either perplexed and unintelligible, or falſe and inconcluſive.

When the Reverend Mr. JONATHAN EDWARDS, Preſident of the College of NEW JERSEY, aſſerts a *moral neceſſity* in actions, conſiſtent with free-will, he brings together ideas, which, if not directly repugnant, are wholly diſſimilar and unrelated; juſt as I ſhould do, if, at a vaſt expence of learned labour, I endeavoured to prove and explain the *natural morality* of actions.

It is proper, however, to lay before the Reader his own Explanation of his own hypotheſis.

" *Moral neceſſity* is owing to the Power and Government of the inclination of the heart, either habitual, or occaſional, excited by Motive." Letter to a Miniſter of the Church of Scotland, p. 11.

It is to be hoped that this Miniſter was one of the double-ſighted, as the meaning lies rather too deep for common Obſervers.

Again,

and conſtantly bid defiance to nature and common ſenſe, but often, in its pious paroxyſms, loſes ſight of both.

IT is difficult to attempt definitions in ſubjects, where fancy has ſo large a ſway;

Again, when this very philoſophizing Divine aſſerts the *moral neceſſity* of God's *volitions*, or the neceſſary determinations of the divine will, in order to defend and eſtabliſh the Calviniſtic Doctrines concerning *Abſolute Decrees*, an *univerſal*, *deciſive Providence*, and the reſt of that ſtamp; he dogmatizes with great airs of aſſurance in matters, where if we venture to ſpeculate at all, it ſhould be with great modeſty. For we never can comprehend how events of a certain claſs are connected with their cauſes; and are unable to reconcile the divine preſcience with our own freedom, though we are clearly convinced of both. Nor will the new, and nonſenſical diſtinctions of God's *preceptive* will, and of his *diſpoſing* will, in the leaſt aſſiſt us, or alleviate the abſurdities which follow from the Doctrine of *Abſolute*, *eternal*, *perſonal Election*.

He inſults Dr. WHITBY, through four or five pages, for aſſerting, that the freedom of human actions is eſſential to virtue, and, at the ſame time, allowing that moral excellence in God is neceſſary, yet virtuous and praiſe-worthy. This quick-ſighted Metaphyſician, who is ſo fond of inventing or adopting mere verbal diſtinctions, which have no foundation, cannot diſcern a difference between an infinite Nature, and his own; but argues and concludes from the one to the other, as freely and peremptorily, as if the analogy between them was perfect throughout, and as if he underſtood both with equal clearneſs.

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yet, in order to put the unwary on their guard, I will endeavour to give ſome account of it. I ſhould call it then, "A ſpecies of Enthuſiaſm, which draws the attention ſo ſtrongly to ſome *particular* doctrines and duties of *Revealed* religion, and fixes it upon them ſo intently, as almoſt to exclude the other parts of religion, and even morality itſelf." Out of ſuch truths and doctrines, the fanatic of this ſort commonly ſelects the moſt *difficult* that can be found. His favourite and conſtant topics are *Grace* and *Aſſurance*, *Predeſtination* and *Original Sin*. On *theſe* he will harangue the unlettered multitude; but inſtead of explaining the terms in any rational, or conſiſtent manner, he boldly aſſumes a ſet of principles of his own; and draws from them ſuch concluſions as are beſt ſuited to his wild hypotheſis. At firſt ſight, one would not

imagine

imagine that ſuch perſons were at all likely to be poſſeſſed with the love of ſyſtem. It is certain however, that they pretend to ſolve almoſt every difficulty that occurs in the conduct of Providence, by the help of thoſe principles, or leading truths of the Goſpel, as they chuſe to call them. The ground-work of the whole ſeems to be as follows,

" God being ſupremely perfect, and infinitely *greater* than the Univerſe (i. e. more important) a regard to his own glory, or a diſplay of his perfections muſt be the ſole end of his Adminiſtration. If man ſhould never ſin, his juſtice in puniſhing him could never be diſplayed. For this reaſon he predeſtined the fall of ADAM; and leſt opportunities for the full diſplay of his vindictive juſtice ſhould be wanting, he introduces all the poſte-

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rity of ADAM into the world with wills bent upon ſinning, and averſe from goodneſs.

ON the other hand, with a view to diſplay his *mercy*, an infinite Atonement was provided for all indeed in *one* ſenſe, but this, in the event and iſſue, was made for very few—the favoured and fortunate Objects of his free Election and ſaving Grace! who are to admire and applaud his juſtice in damning to all eternity by far the greater part of their devoted race. If any Objection is made to this ſcheme, the Anſwer is, God is omnipotent, and not reſtrained, or accountable in any ſenſe whatever: he may therefore diſpoſe of his creatures according to his own abſolute decrees, without any regard to their behaviour, to the reaſons of things, or the rectitude of his own nature. But,

if

if any reaſon of his ſeverity be required, we are told, that man, in conſequence of his inbred corruption, and inherent turpitude, is born under the wrath* of God, and is at enmity with him in the ſtricteſt and propereſt ſenſe of thoſe words: we are told, that the Sin of our firſt Parents being a direct offence againſt the majeſty of an *infinite*, all-perfect Being, and puniſhable not only in themſelves, but in all their deſcendants; that part of theſe, whom he hath not predeſtined to ſalvation, muſt of courſe be baniſhed from his preſence, and conſigned to endleſs and *infinite* miſery" (although *more* than this his juſtice could not decree, nor his power inflict, for the puniſhment of *actual*, *wilful*, *incorrigible* ſinners!)

* See the learned Dr. Whitby's long Note on "Children of Wrath" to the 3rd v. of the 2nd Chap. of the Ep. to the Epheſians.

Such, I think, are the main branches of this ſyſtem (grafted on the old ſtock of heretical error) which, abſurd and ſhocking as it is, yet when artfully modernized, and moulded by the hands of an able Maſter, has a plauſible appearance: and as it pretends a particular conformity with Scripture, and favours the ſuperſtition of the greater part, I do not much wonder that it has many adherents. I believe theſe leading principles of it are truly ſtated; for to trace it through all its parts, is not my deſign. I would only obſerve, that they proceed from the ſame ſource, and terminate in the ſame folly, as the errors of moſt other Sects, whether ancient or modern. They would all be "wiſe above that which is written," and account for every obſcurity in the meaſures of divine government;—unveiled but in part to us,

and never perhaps to be underſtood but in part, by the higheſt Order of celeſtial Beings.

If from the *Opinions* and *Tenets* of the Syſtem, we proceed to the *Temper* and *Genius* of its Profeſſors, we ſhall ſoon diſcover them in the Sentiments, or Matter, as well as in the Stile, or Expreſſion; an ill-placed, uncharitable ſeverity and cenſoriouſneſs in the former, chiefly directed againſt the regular Clergy: and in the latter, that coarſe and ſlovenly manner, which is generally choſen for want of a better, though ſometimes affected under the ſpecious pretence of a Scriptural ſimplicity. But in nothing is the Character we are here conſidering ſo ſtrongly ſeen, as in the frequent cuſtom, and abſurd manner, of *Quoting the Scriptures*, which either converts into Nonſenſe

ſenſe the paſſages cited; or perverts the ſenſe of them, juſt as the preſent fancy, or purpoſe may require. And here I would beg leave to intimate, that ſo long as any Preacher, or Writer, is guilty of this fault, whatever may be his rank in the Church, or Republic of letters, he may juſtly be ſuſpected either of leaning to this Character, or of aſſuming it for ſome private purpoſe.

I ſaid, *ſuſpected*—for the truth is, this practice is alſo owing to cauſes of *another* kind. Ever ſince POPERY has been *reaſoned*, as well as laughed, out of countenance in all Proteſtant countries, the growth of Deiſm, and the decay of Piety have juſtly been complained of here; and are now more alarming than ever; notwithſtanding it is the glory of our Age and Country to have produced the beſt

Comments on the Scriptures, and the ableſt Defences of Religion that ever were written: notwithſtanding too, the AUGUST PERSONS, whoſe Examples* ſhould naturally have that Influence, which neither Laws, nor Authority can have, over the *hearts* of men, are ſo ſingularly eminent for their amiable qualities; ſuch acknowledged Patterns of virtuous conduct.

BESIDES the *ſly Sceptical*, and the *malignant free-thinking Genius*, whoſe intentions are manifeſtly hoſtile to religion, there hath crept into theſe kingdoms a *cold Philoſophic Spirit*, which, by overrating the endowments of the human mind, and inſiſting too ſtrongly on the

* It is not at all ſurpriſing, that ſome Perſons, whoſe feelings are naturally cold, ſhould, when placed in a certain ſituation, affect *the fervors of piety*; or that others, who are ſtrangers to the power and efficacy of religion, ſhould aſſume the appearance of it.

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right propenſities of our common nature, hath almoſt ſuperſeded alike the virtues of Faith, and the bleſſings of Grace. It has even taught men,—dependant, degenerate, ſinful men, to conſider the love of God, and gratitude to the Redeemer,—the moſt natural, and the moſt reaſonable of all our affections, as a ſpecies of Enthuſiaſm *. Such notions were the more formidable, becauſe they ſprang up among ſtudious and contemplative perſons, who were not ſuſpected of any ill deſigns, nor actuated, perhaps, by any wrong motives. It is eaſy to perceive that ſuch an accident muſt have been extremely favourable to the growth of METHODISM, whoſe main purpoſe is, to reprobate Reaſon and Philoſophy; to awaken and inflame the

* So little indeed is the connexion which this paſſion has with the love of God, that it really proceeds from the love of Ourſelves. Hence the groundleſs perſuaſion, ſo prevalent with all Enthuſiaſts, that *they* are the peculiar friends and favourites of Heaven.

devout affections; and rouſe men to a ſenſe of piety by inceſſant appeals to their hopes and fears. There is indeed in every ſtage of ſociety, and in every period of life, abundant cauſe to awaken that ſenſe. But it is not conſidered by zealots, that, in order to *maintain*, and *preſerve* it, religion muſt be placed on its proper baſis; the proofs of it muſt be ſubmitted to reaſon; and the obligations to it enforced by ſuitable arguments. And although it be neceſſary to appeal to the paſſions in their turn, yet a ſettled piety can only be the reſult of an informed underſtanding.

THERE are ſome Paſſages in FENELON's Dialogues on the Eloquence of the Pulpit, which have ſo near a relation to the preſent ſubject, that I think it not amiſs to tranſcribe them.

" A Preacher ought to affect people by ſtrong images, but it is from the Scriptures he ſhould learn to make powerful impreſſions. There he may clearly diſcover the way to render Sermons plain and popular, without loſing the force and dignity they ought always to poſſeſs.

If the Clergy applied themſelves to this mode of teaching, we ſhould have two different ſorts of Preachers: They, who are endowed with a great ſhare of vivacity, would explain the Scriptures clearly, without imitating its lively and animated manner; and if they expounded the word of God judiciouſly, and ſupported their doctrine by an exemplary life; they would be very good Preachers. They would employ what St. Ambrose requires, a chaſte, ſimple, clear ſtyle, full of weight and gravity, without affecting elegance,

or deſpiſing the ſmoothneſs and graces of language. The other ſort, being of a poetical turn of mind, would explain the holy Book *in its own ſtyle and figures:* and by that means become accompliſhed Preachers. The former would inſtruct their hearers with ſolidity and perſpicuity; the latter would add to their inſtruction the ſublimity, the vehemence, and divine enthuſiaſm of the Scriptures, which would be (if I may ſo ſay) entire and living in them, as much as it can be in men, who are not miraculouſly inſpired from above."

One would not imagine that Obſervations ſo poor in themſelves, and ſo ill expreſſed, ſhould have come from the Pen of ſo great a Man. Beſides the looſeneſs, and tautology, the confuſion and inaccuracy, that run through them, either

either he is ſtrangely miſtaken in *one* point, or he has expreſſed himſelf very incautiouſly. To explain Scripture by the very things, which want explaining—its own ſtyle and figures, is a moſt preposterous method. Preachers too of the poetical caſt he mentions, if they indulge it, as they generally do, in unfolding the Doctrines of our religion, give us, in the room of theſe, their own fantaſtic notions. For perſons of this turn of mind very ſeldom have a logical head: and if they were *capable* of judging better, would hardly ſubmit to be reſtrained by thoſe ſevere laws of criticiſm, and ſound rules of interpretation, which the good ſenſe of theſe later ages has laid down as inviolable. I believe indeed that ſuch lively and poetical Expoſitors as the good Prelate mentions, might eaſily become *accompliſhed Myſtics*; multiply ſymbols and

ſhadows with great dexterity of invention; and extract allegorical, or prophetic meanings, from almoſt every paſſage or ſentence of the inſpired Writers.

INDEED, our *modern Myſtics* ſeem to conſider the very words and phraſes of Scripture as inſpired and dictated by the Holy Spirit. Hence, the abſurd, ſuperſtitious manner of *Quoting*, and *Applying* them ſo common with thoſe Teachers, whoſe piety ſeems to draw all its ſtrength and nouriſhment from *Sounds*; and whoſe zeal, though well meant, is too often buſied in diſparaging the Obligations of Natural religion. For a proof of this we may appeal to the Sermons and other Publications of their celebrated Preachers. I ſpeak of the generality; and although perhaps there may be ſome exceptions; yet I think that even the ſoberer and

ſedater

ſedater part are by no means exempt from this fault. For as to thoſe, who, without any pretenſions, but ſuch as cannot be allowed ſince the time that inſpiration ceaſed, aſſume to themſelves the office of Apoſtles; and traverſe the kingdom to reſcue diſtreſſed and neglected *Souls* from the hands of their own proper Guides, and appointed Inſtructors, — I do not concern myſelf with ſuch perſons. If *they* are beneath the notice of laws, as well as beyond the reach of arguments; and if fifty years' experience cannot open the eyes of the *People*; I know of no remedy: the evil muſt e'en take its courſe.

It is true, the main ſpring or ſource of ſuch fanatical exceſſes is in the mind and heart of man, which lie open to every ſpecies of error and extravagance, if they

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are not prepared and guarded by a right education.

But there is *another* cauſe, latent indeed, or little attended to, which hath had a powerful influence, and principal ſhare, if not in producing this Evil, yet at leaſt in extending the effects of it. So ſlippery is the ground I am now upon, that, even with Truth to uphold and ſupport me, I feel as *he* did, who walked upon the waves. Tender in touching the laurels of ſuch Heroes, and reſtrained by a reverence which borders on ſuperſtition, I *dare* not begin my Inquiries, where I *ought* to begin them,—with our Barrows, our Tillotsons, and our Atterburys: For, moſt certain it is, that many even of *their* Compoſitions are exceedingly blemiſhed by the

the *frequency* and *looſeneſs* of Scripture-Quotations; while this practice, authorized by them, and by other regular Divines of the firſt character, hath afforded a handle for thoſe *wild Applications of Scripture*, on which the whole ſyſtem of METHODISM is built and eſtabliſhed. Before the Reformation our Divinity was wholly made up of the old Logic and Metaphyſics of the Schools, employed in explaining the opinions or interpretations of the Fathers, and reconciling theſe with the ſtrange, and ſometimes contradictory deciſions of Popes, and Councils. Since that æra, learned Nonſenſe has loſt great part of the reverence it was held in, and Authority, though ſtill revered by men of ſenſe, is no longer oppoſed to Conviction. The FATHERS in general are now conſulted, rather as witneſſes of facts, than interpreters of doctrines; and

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thoſe great Men, who led the way in collecting the meaning of Scripture from the Scriptures themſelves, beſtowed ſuch inceſſant pains on theſe Writings, and arrived at ſuch an intimacy with them, that the *Spirit of Quoting* them, though rather immoderate, was perfectly natural.

And as our eminent Divines of an earlier period had thus paved the way for the *introduction* of Methodism, ſo thoſe of a later date preſent us with proofs of its *Influence*, and the *progreſs* it has made.

The Reader will perhaps be ſtartled, when the incomparable Secker is produced as an inſtance of this. But whoever ſhall examine with attention and impartiality the ſubſtance of his arguments in favour of *Original Sin*, and the ſenſe of the Paſſages he has brought from Scripture

Scripture to confirm thoſe arguments, as ſtated in his twenty-ninth Lecture on the Church-Catechiſm, will be able to judge how far the charge is ſupported by proof. As the Authority of ſuch Perſons is the more apt to miſlead us in ſome inſtances, the more their learning is capable of guiding us in the main, it is proper to evince the truth of what is here advanced by deſcending to particulars. Among the ſixteen different ſenſes, which have been offered or obtruded by the Writers,

(——————omnibus unus
Error, ſed variis illudit partibus——)

who defend that controverted Doctrine, his prudence directed him to the mildeſt and moſt moderate. And yet, to ſupport even this, he is driven to manifeſt inconſiſtency in his reaſonings, and to applications of Scripture improper and erroneous.

neous. His uſual judgment and accuracy in *this* particular ſeems to have deſerted him;—or rather perhaps *he* has deſerted.—but I forbear. It has been ſhewn by Biſhop TAYLOR, the learned Dr. TAYLOR of Norwich, and others, that thenotion of our Nature being corrupted or defiled in conſequence of ADAM's Sin, is not to be found in the Scriptures, when fairly interpreted; and that in the firſt and pureſt ages of the Church there was no interpretation of them, which ſuppoſed men chargeable with the guilt of any ſins, excepting their own. But when the blind and preſumptuous Philoſophy of the Schools was permitted to fabricate Creeds; and when Power was employed to ſupport and enforce them; whatever be the fact with reſpect to our Nature, the Scriptures at leaſt were very ſoon corrupted. And after this opinion had once

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got poſſeſſion, other cauſes conſpired to infix and eſtabliſh it in the minds of men. Its ſuppoſed connexion, and pretended affinity with the Scheme of Redemption, and Doctrine of Grace, have procured it ſuch reſpect and reverence, that, to this day, he, who ſhould venture to expreſs a doubt concerning the truth of it, would, at leaſt by its advocates, be reputed a perſon of very looſe principles, if not a Deiſt in his heart.—Is it then at all juſt, or reaſonable to expect, that a Perſon at the head of the Church ſhould diſturb the peace of it, and ſubject himſelf to cenſure and obloquy, by oppoſing a harmleſs and inveterate error?—Inveterate we grant it is: how very far from harmleſs, and how little neceſſary to the peace of the Church, will ſoon appear. But, in the mean time, is there no medium between openly

openly oppoſing a popular Opinion, and directly eſpouſing, or defending it?

In the courſe of his admirable Lectures, the Archbiſhop having explained the ſeveral duties of men in their different ſtates, and the obligations they are under to perform them, naturally goes on to inquire, what *ability* they have for this purpoſe. To ſhew how defective they are, and how greatly they ſtand in need of divine aſſiſtance, he reaſons in the following manner:

"Indeed, had we ever ſo great abilities, we muſt have them, not of ourſelves, but of our Maker, from whom all the powers of all creatures are derived. But ſomething farther than this is plainly meant here: that there are no powers belong-

belonging to human Nature in its preſent ſtate, ſufficient for ſo great a purpoſe" [that of ſerving God in an acceptable manner.] " The love of God is ſpiritual: but we are carnal; ſold under ſin." And that ſuch is our condition will appear, by reflecting, firſt, what it was at our birth; ſecondly, what we have made it ſince.

As to the firſt, we all give proofs, greater or leſs, of an inbred diſorder, and wrongneſs in our Underſtandings, Will, and Affections. Poſſibly, one proof that ſome may give of it, may be a backwardneſs to own it. But they little conſider, how ſevere a ſentence they would paſs, by denying it, on themſelves, and all mankind. Even with our natural bad inclinations for ſome Excuſe, we are blameable enough for the ill things that

we do. But how much more ſhould we be ſo, if we did them all without the ſolicitation of any inward depravity to plead afterwards in our favour? In point of intereſt therefore, as well as truth, we are concerned to admit an Original Proneneſs to Evil in our frame: while yet reaſon plainly teaches, at the ſame time, that whatever God created, was originally, in its kind, perfect and good.

To reconcile theſe two things would have been a great difficulty, had not Revelation pointed out the way, by informing us, that Man was indeed *made upright*, but that the very firſt of human race loſt their innocence, and their happineſs together; and tainting, by wilful tranſgreſſion, their own nature, tainted by conſequence that of their whole poſterity. "Thus, by one man, Sin entered into

into the world, and Death by Sin, and ſo Death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned." We find, in fact, however difficult it may be to account for it in ſpeculation, that the diſpoſition of Parents, both in body and mind, very commonly deſcend, in ſome degree, to their Children. And therefore it is extremely credible, that ſo great a change in the minds of our firſt Parents from abſolute rightneſs of temper to preſumptuous wickedneſs, accompanied with an equal change of body, from an immortal condition to a mortal one, produced perhaps in part by the phyſical effects of the forbidden tree; that theſe things, I ſay, ſhould derive their fatal influence to every ſucceeding generation. For though God will never impute any thing to us, as our *perſonal fault*, which is not of our own doing; yet he may very juſtly with-

hold from us thoſe privileges, which he granted to our firſt Parents, only on condition of their faultleſs obedience; and leave us ſubject to thoſe inconveniences, which followed of courſe from their diſobedience: as in multitudes of other caſes we ſee Children in far worſe circumſtances by the faults of their diſtant forefathers, than they otherwiſe would have been. And moſt evidently, it is no more a hardſhip upon us *to become ſuch as we are*, by means of ADAM's tranſgreſſion, than to ſuffer what we often do for the tranſgreſſion of our other Anceſtors; or to have been *created ſuch as we are*, without any one's trangreſſion; which laſt, all who diſbelieve Original Sin, muſt affirm to be our caſe."

I have cited theſe Obſervations at their full length, and without interruption, that

that the meaning of them, when it *can* be diſcerned, may be ſeen with the greater certainty. For indeed the ſtate of the Queſtion is ſo often changed, and the condition of our Nature ſo variouſly repreſented, that it is extremely difficult to affix any preciſe or determinate ſenſe to the ſeveral deſcriptions that are given concerning it. Sometimes the account is ſuch, that any one, not ſworn to a Syſtem, would readily aſſent to it. What we derive from ADAM, is the loſs or forfeiture of thoſe preternatural privileges, which God, out of free grace and bounty, had reſerved for him and his deſcendants, had he not tranſgreſſed; and thoſe poſitive evils, which were the natural conſequences of his tranſgreſſion (and to *him* a puniſhment, properly ſo called), viz. Mortality, Pain, Sickneſs, Sorrow, and the reſt of that tragical train, which we,

by our own tranſgreſſions, have rendered more afflicting ſtill. At other times, it is beſides all this, an inherent, unavoidable depravity of mind and will; a preſumptuous, inbred wickedneſs, which renders us ſinful and guilty in the eye of God, before it is poſſible for us to have any idea of ſin or guilt. That all this is included in the ſenſe, which the Archbiſhop intended to eſpouſe upon the whole, is evident from the following expreſſions—of our firſt Parents having *tainted* by wilful tranſgreſſion their own Nature, and by conſequence, that of their whole poſterity—of *their* depravity deſcending to us, by natural inheritance, as a *moral* ſtain, exactly in the ſame way, as the mere effects of bodily temperament (which undoubtedly influences the mind in many reſpects), or of a fortune, impaired or ruined by ill conduct,

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are derived from Parents on their guiltleſs Offspring. As if this were not inconſiſtent enough, almoſt in the ſame breath it is aſſerted, that our Original weakneſs is not our fault, and that God will never impute any thing to us as our *perſonal* fault, which is not our doing. What is meant by *perſonal fault*, I cannot conceive, unleſs this epithet be thrown in for the ſake of ſaving the Notion, which here, for a moment, ſeems to be given up; but then the ſenſe muſt be,—a very ſtrange one indeed!—that the fault of *Another* may be imputed to us, though we could not prevent it. Again it is ſaid, that, with all this inbred diſorder, and inherent depravity, reſident in the very frame and texture of our minds, we feel within us an Obligation of Conſcience to do every thing that is right and good.

Would not any one conceive from this repreſentation, that the great Creator, inſtead of making Man in his own image, had reſolved to preſerve an image of the Chaos in the human mind? For what elſe do we ſee, but jarring principles, and conflicting elements—Non benè junctarum diſcordia ſemina rerum! Yet this Nature, it ſeems, depraved and defiled as it is, has *one* great advantage to recommend it. "They little conſider, how ſevere a ſentence they would paſs, by denying it, on themſelves, and all mankind. Even with our natural bad inclinations for ſome Excuſe, we are blameable enough for the ill things that we do. But how much more ſhould we be ſo, if we did them all without the ſolicitation of any inward depravity to plead afterwards in our favour? In point of intereſt therefore, as well as truth, we are con-

concerned to admit an Original proneneſs to Evil in our frame." Not in the leaſt: becauſe the mere imbecillity of our Nature, and a bad Education, neither of which may be owing to Ourſelves, any more than ADAM's having ſinned, will, for thoſe, who look for Excuſes, do juſt as well. Indeed, if the *other* could be pleaded with any colour of reaſon, the moſt wicked man living would never want an apology,—I might have ſaid, a juſtification. But what an entrance to ſuperſtition alſo is here opened! No one can pretend to form the leaſt conjecture concerning the meaſure * of the ſuppoſed pollution, or the manner * of its conveyance;

* If it be ſaid, that we may juſt as well deny the exiſtence of *Grace*, ſince we know neither in what meaſure, nor in what manner *this* power is conveyed, and exerted; I anſwer, that although we cannot underſtand how, or in what degree the mind of man is influenced by the Deity: yet we know from experience, that it *may* be influenced in various ways without

veyance; ſo that if we will needs account for either, recourſe muſt be had to the old occult qualities, or magical influences, and not to any ſound philoſophical principles, which never can explain them. Even without the aſſiſtance of ſuch commodious Doctrines, men are but too apt, when they violate the laws of religion and conſcience, to extenuate their wickedneſs by throwing the blame upon Nature: they eaſily reaſon themſelves into the perſuaſion, that vice is conſtitutional, and the natural force of their paſſions too fixed to be altered, and too violent to be reſiſted. On the contrary, thoſe, who are ſincere in the purſuit of virtue; who

without our perceiving it; and ſurely then *ſuch* an influence may well be admitted *after* the proof of a divine Revelation, which declares the fact. But that the holieſt of Beings ſhould be the Author or Cauſe of moral depravity, is equally repugnant to Reaſon and Scripture. Yet this he muſt be, if he conveys it either by his own immediate act, or by the operation of thoſe laws by which he governs the Univerſe.

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endeavour to diſcipline and ſubdue their paſſions, if they admit this Notion, and are ever ſo little inclined to dejection, or melancholy, when their beſt efforts prove ineffectual, as will ſometimes happen, may be driven to a ſtate of inconſolable deſperation. Lord BACON ſays, men ſhould not ſet themſelves too hard taſks: and I venture to add, that if they have any grounds for ſuppoſing, that Nature has ſet them ſuch, the performance is likely to be nothing; or very ſhort of their real abilities, imperfect as they are.

BUT the ſentence with which the Obſervations conclude, is of all the moſt curious. "And moſt evidently, it is no more a hardſhip upon us *to become ſuch as we are* by means of ADAM's tranſgreſſion, than to ſuffer what we often do for the tranſgreſſion of our other Anceſtors; or

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to have been created ſuch as we are, without any one's tranſgreſſion, which laſt, all, who diſbelieve Original Sin, muſt affirm to be our caſe."

THIS ſentence, in the out-ſet, promiſes great perſpicuity, but is involved in ſuch darkneſs both of ſentiment and expreſſion, that I know not at all what to make of it. God almighty, in virtue of his ſupreme dominion, might certainly create us with ſuch excellences, or imperfections, as to him ſeemed proper. And although our condition, had ADAM continued innocent, and upright, might have been much more ſecure and happy, than it now is, yet, leaving Revelation quite out of the queſtion, we certainly have no right to complain of its being leſs advantageous in conſequence of his tranſgreſſion; or becauſe we inherit ſome part of his

his misfortunes, provided we are not loaded with his guilt; formally and finally puniſhed for his fault; or liable to be ſo. If Original Sin means leſs than this, it means nothing at all. But this ſurely is ſomething very different from a ſtate of mere imperfection, whatever cauſe that ſtate be referred to: and whether the former would, or would not, be a hardſhip, the common feelings of mankind will determine in a moment.

From the *Reaſonings* of the Archbiſhop let us now paſs on to his *Applications of Scripture*. The firſt Paſſage cited, is as follows: "The law of God is ſpiritual, but we are carnal; ſold under Sin." From all that precedes and follows this Quotation, it is quite evident, that it is produced as confirming his arguments for the univerſal, unavoidable pollution of our Nature

Nature through ADAM's Sin. Now, the deſign of the Apoſtle may be clearly collected from the connexion which the Paſſage has with the context, as well as from the chief ſubject of the Chapter it belongs to. And it is the plain purport of both to point out the very different *ſpirit* and *genius* of the *Law*, and *Goſpel*, in order to cure the Judaizing Converts, of their remaining attachment to thoſe carnal Ordinances, under which they had hitherto lived, and from which they were now happily releaſed. The beſt method of effecting this cure, was, to ſhew them the inſufficiency, and imperfection of the *Law*, they ſo ſuperſtitiouſly revered;—to ſhew them, that though wiſe in the grounds of its inſtitution, as well as uſeful and neceſſary in its ſeaſon, yet it always favoured their carnal, and corrupt diſpoſition in two capital inſtances—by the

the burthenſome number, and galling ſtrictneſs of its commands and prohibitions, increaſing *tranſgreſſions*; and, at the ſame time, leſſening the merit of *obedience* by the meanneſs of the motives it propoſed. On the contrary, the *Law of God*, now clearly revealed in the Goſpel, *is ſpiritual*, and will free You, ſays St. PAUL, if You follow the ſpirit of it, from the dominion of that *animal* principle, by indulging which, your lapſed Nature, originally frail and imperfect, *becomes* corrupted and defiled: will releaſe You from all ſubjection to thoſe luſts and paſſions, by yielding to which, You are *ſold*, as it were, and enſlaved *under ſin*.

THIS, I believe, is a fair and full interpretation of St. PAUL's words. And I would beg leave to remark, that, in the courſe of his reaſoning, he plainly ſuppoſes

ſuppoſes good propenſities belonging to our Nature, as well as bad: by obeying the former ZACHARIAS, ELIZABETH, and others are ſaid to have been *righteous before God*, and to have *walked in all the Commandments of the Lord blameleſs*. Now, as no one would impute the conduct of theſe to Original righteouſneſs, ſo the very different behaviour of the greater part of mankind may be eaſily accounted for without the ſuppoſition of Original Sin, which traduces our Nature, and diſhonours the Deity.

SECOND Paſſage. "Thus, by one Man Sin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned." ADAM being the firſt of the human race, if he ſinned at all, muſt be the firſt, who ſinned; ſin therefore, *entered* into the world by him,

him, and in conſequence of it all his deſcendants (one or two excepted), became ſubject to that mortality, which he had incurred. Sin propagated from that root, or *beginning*, not from that *cauſe*, did afterwards become general; and every Sinner deſerved death upon his own account, though, in ſome reſpects, not ſo criminal as ADAM was, nor at all the more ſo for having deſcended from him.

THIRD Paſſage. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his Youth. We were ſhapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did our Mother conceive us." The latter member of the Sentence is put in the Plural, on purpoſe to apply the aſſertion more directly and clearly to the point of an original, and imputed guilt. Yet this, as might be proved from many parallel

places * of Scripture, is a mere Hebraiſm, or hyperbolical Expreſſion, denoting only a high degree of ſinfulneſs. Had it been really inherent, ſtrictly natural, and of courſe unavoidable, DAVID would not ſo often have deplored his own folly, but rather have complained of his hard fate; and have aſcribed ſome part at leaſt of the blame to *that* cauſe.

IN ſhort, there is nothing in any of theſe Paſſages, when rightly interpreted, which can in the leaſt favour the notion of a natural, or original curruption, derived from ADAM, and ſeated in the mind and will. Now, if neither theſe, nor any of the other Paſſages of Scripture, which have been alleged in ſupport of this notion, do really ſupport it; then

* Job v. 34. and xxxi. 18. Iſa. xlviii. 8.

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the ninth Article of our Church, was meant to be underſtood with a reaſonable latitude, leaving every man in ſuch difficult points, to chuſe among the different ſenſes of which the words are capable, that which he thinks moſt conformable to truth and Scripture. Of this we may be convinced from the beginning of the ſixth, and from the whole of the twenty-ninth Article. It is true the ſecond concludes thus, "very God, and very Man, who truly ſuffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a ſacrifice, not only for *Original guilt*, but alſo for actual ſins of men." But the ſeventeenth concludes with the following general declaration, "Furthermore, we muſt receive God's promiſes in ſuch wiſe, as they be generally ſet forth to us in holy Scripture. And in our Doings, that will of God is to be fol-

lowed, which we have expreſsly declared to us in the word of God." Now, as the ſenſe of the former Extract muſt not be ſuch as directly contradicts all our ideas of God's juſtice and goodneſs, as declared in every part of his word; ſo the terms, *Original guilt* may very fairly mean *that guilt*, which the founders of our race contracted for themſelves only, and which, although not transferable to their deſcendants, hath indeed involved them in many of its conſequences. But as the Compilers expreſsly admit and aſſert, that Scripture is to be our ultimate guide in matters of faith, as well as practice; as the Article, which treats of Original Sin, founds all it aſſerts on what the Scripture declares concerning it, and borrows their very language to expreſs its meaning, no doubt it muſt be ſubject to the ſame rules of interpretation with

Scripture itſelf; in which particular precepts or doctrines are never to be conſtrued in a ſenſe not conſiſtent with its plain and general tenour.

And, on the other hand, if we appeal to the principles of a ſound Philoſophy, they too will confirm this liberty of interpreting in the preſent caſe, by aſſuring us, that the notion of *guilt* cannot, without abſurdity, be applied to *natures*, the proper ſubjects of this quality being *perſons* only. For when it is applied to nations, or communities, it muſt be in the way of *perſonification*; and the individuals, or parts, of which they are compoſed, are *actual ſharers* in the guilt *imputed* to the whole. So little need is there to be diſturbed at that Article*; to ſettle the preciſe

* The Reader, who wiſhes for further ſatisfaction on this Article, may compare Biſhop Taylor's Expoſition

preciſe ſenſe, in which the Compilers themſelves underſtood it; or to defend the Conduct of thoſe, who aſſent to it, by Scholaſtic ſubtilties, or mean prevarication.

PERMIT me to add, before I diſmiſs this topic, that one of the beſt arguments to prove the moral government of God, is the moral Nature which he has given to Man, and a diſpoſition, on the whole, favourable to virtue, not merely in individuals, but in the race, or ſpecies *.

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poſition of it, according to Scripture and Reaſon, Sect. 6. in the Unum Neceſſarium, with that by Biſhop BURNET, who rather ſtates the Opinions of others, than delivers his own. It muſt, however, be confeſſed, that he leans to the opinion of our Nature having contracted a real defilement from ADAM's Sin, which he endeavours, like SECKER, and others, to give an account of in a philoſophical way, although he modeſtly gives it as uncertain and conjectural.

* Were we to take a fair eſtimate of our Nature, I believe that not one bad principle or paſſion would be found to be properly a part of it, which doth not ariſe

If rather than give up a favourite ſyſtem, or fanciful hypotheſis, we abandon this ſtrong poſt of Religion, the enemies of our faith will improve the opportunity *. How indeed ſuch an hypotheſis ſhould ever have pretended any connexion with the Doctrine of Grace, or the Scheme of Redemption, it is hard to conceive. For the neceſſity of Grace to preſerve us from the dangers of ſin, and ſupport us under the difficulties of duty, does by no means imply, that our Nature was originally corrupted, becauſe that neceſſity may be proved juſt as well from thoſe obvious

ariſe from the perverſion of ſome good one. The very worſt of all, even malice itſelf, is but the abuſe of anger, or reſentment.

* A late noble Author, whoſe peculiar diſtinction it is, to have defended by his Writings the Conſtitution which he laboured to ruin by his conduct, has availed himſelf of the Advantages which the Clergy have given him to aſſault Religion, by their deducing from the Scriptures ſuch untenable Doctrines. His chief Attack is directed againſt the moral government of God, which, if we admit thoſe Doctrines, lies open to inſurmountable Objections.

defects of it, which we all feel and deplore. Not only frail, and helpleſs, but lapſed and degenerate, it is quite inſufficient of itſelf, and utterly unable, to attain that excellence, which rational and intelligent creatures cannot but deſire, and devoutly wiſh for. And as the unavoidable wants, as well as the *actual* ſins of mankind will always find exerciſe enough for this benign influence of the Holy Spirit; ſo, to repreſent our Nature as more corrupt than it is, in order to magnify the merits of Grace, ſeems next to the folly of indulging in ſin "that Grace may abound." In the ſecond place, the diſplay of the divine goodneſs and mercy in the Scheme of Redemption is far more magnificent and glorious on the ſuppoſition, that the wretched ſtate to which mankind are reduced, is the conſequence of their own miſconduct, than

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if the Evil, which demands ſo amazing a remedy, proceeded ultimately from God's decrees. But perſons of a certain temper, and caſt of mind, can ſee the Deity in no other light, than that of an Almighty Tyrant; and love to conſider their frail fellow-creatures, as criminals from the cradle, at enmity * with their Maker, and heirs of perdition! Exit is animi tenor (ſays an Author, who never dreamt of Original Sin, or its Advocates) in rigorem quendam, torvitatemque naturæ, duram et inflexibilem; affectuſque humanos adimit. Nothing here ſaid is intended in the leaſt to reflect upon the excellent Archbiſhop, than whom no one was ever farther removed from ſuch a diſpoſition. How then ſhall we account for ſuch an inſtance of deluſion in a per-

* See the learned Dr. WHITBY's long Note to the 3rd v. of the 2nd Chap. of St. PAUL's Ep. to the Epheſians.

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ſon of his ſuperlative ſenſe and diſcernment?—An airy Meteor, reſembling that fixed Star of ORTHODOXY, which preſided at his birth, and ruled him through life, did perhaps deceive him; and, by its powerful influence on his fancy, ſwayed and directed the deciſions of his judgment.

It would be to no purpoſe to produce inſtances of ſuch faults in ordinary Writers, and it is now ſubmitted to the diſcernment of the Reader, how far the following Extracts may be conſidered as proofs of the *looſe* and *negligent* manner, in which the late Dr. OGDEN has *applied* the Scriptures, and *alluded* to them. And whatever may be the iſſue of this Examination, I ſhould hope that his friends will be leſs offended, when they ſee that he is placed in ſuch good Company.

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SERMON XXIII.

TENTH COMMANDMENT. PART II.

Coloſſ. iii. 2.

Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.

The two or three firſt Pages are intended to recommend humility, as the true baſis of elevated affections (a thought, which the firſt ſentence of the Sermon expreſſes by a very apt and ſtriking compariſon;) and to ſhew the miſchiefs of diſcontent from its tendency to render us, 1ſt, *miſerable*; 2ndly, *irreligious*; and 3dly, *unjuſt*. On the two former topics, the thoughts are very common, and not well expreſſed. On the laſt, his obſervations are in the following words:

He will not always withhold his *hands*, whoſe *heart* is entirely ſet on another's property.

property. There will be ſome unhappily favourable moment, when opportunity conſpiring with inclination, the injuſtice long premeditated, will be at length accompliſhed; and then, as the Prophet ſpeaketh, "They, who *conceive miſchief*, bring forth iniquity." Now, to *conceive miſchief*, is a phraſe of ſuch very general import, that it has no more relation to Covetouſneſs, than it has to ambition, rage, luſt, jealouſy, or any other irregular deſire. The faults which ISAIAH rebukes in the Jews, in the Chapter from whence this paſſage is taken, are hypocriſy, violence, and a general diſregard to truth and juſtice; and indeed the more vehement and impetuous paſſions are apter to engage men in miſchievous projects, than the cold, and creeping deſire, which has money for its object.

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"This is to be underſtood of the greater violations of juſtice, attended with danger; for in leſs inſtances, and thoſe that are ſafe, there will be no ſuch circumſpection, and delay. The unfairneſs of the heart within will be ſhewing itſelf inceſſantly; and, like the ſtain of glaſs, through which a ray of the ſun paſſes, will infect all objects, and give its colour to every tranſaction of life." It may be the fault of my apprehenſion, but this compariſon, or ſimilitude, ſeems to me, like the glaſs itſelf, to be endued with the property of obſcuring the objects to be diſcerned through it. For how can the unfairneſs of the heart give its colour to every *tranſaction of life*, unleſs it cauſes them to appear falſe, and unfair, like itſelf? Yet, this I take to be quite wide of the meaning, which ought to be conveyed. For the real effect of it is, that

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it cauſes men to judge of juſt and unjuſt by the rule of intereſt, not that of reaſon and conſcience.

THE Doctor goes on to ſhew, that the very *diſpoſition*, though it ſhould never betray itſelf, or be carried into act, is criminal, and will be puniſhed by the great Searcher of hearts. From the evils of diſcontent before deſcribed, he proceeds to the conſideration of its proper remedy—reflexion on a future judgment, and that contempt of all worldly advantages, or mean purſuits, which it ought to inſpire. "The great doctrines, the awful truths, the glorious promiſes, the tremendous threatenings of our holy religion, catch the heart, and carry it as a ſacrifice, to heaven; but, like the fire of the Lord, that fell on the Altar of ELIJAH, *conſume the wood, and the ſtones, and*

the

the duſt." If the imagery of this ſimilitude, or alluſion, was repreſented by the pencil (the proper way to try the truth of it), we ſhould behold the Doctrines, Truths, Promiſes, and Threatenings of our Religion, characterized by the colours, which their reſpective epithets and qualities demand; and in the form of ſo many flames, laying hold of the heart; carrying it, as a ſacrifice, to heaven; and *conſuming the wood, the ſtones, and the duſt*; i. e. the terreſtrial materials, contained within itſelf, conſidered as an Altar. I have no doubt but this paſſage, when ſpoken, was reputed a very fine one; and ſuch it may probably ſtill appear to many readers. Should that be the caſe, I am far from wiſhing to rob them of their enjoyment; but, from a reverence for Scripture, as well as a regard to literature, muſt purſue the dull,

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and invidious taſk, which is now before me. For the learned have *need* to be reminded, that, to render their Diſcourſes inſtructive and uſeful in the utmoſt extent, they muſt not only conform to the indiſpenſible laws of juſtneſs and propriety, but ſhew ſome degree of *taſte*, in applying the Scriptures.

" The example and death of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is to Chriſtians an argument above all others, enforcing indeed every virtue, but with peculiar advantage this contempt of earthly greatneſs, and the love of God and man.

It is the thing leaſt obſervable in his example, that he prayed for his murderers. *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* He left the boſom and bliſs of his Father, and the glory which he

he had with him before the world was, *on purpoſe* to ſuffer thus: for this very *end*, that he might endure abuſes and inſults, ſtripes and death: a death ignominious, exquiſitely painful and lingering." All this is conceived in the very ſpirit of METHODISM * (by which indeed the whole Sermon ſeems to be informed and animated)—as if he delighted in ſufferings, *as ſuch*, or choſe them for their *own* ſake. Could he be *capable* of thoſe ſufferings, which he voluntarily ſubmitted to, as *means* to accompliſh his great purpoſe, unleſs he diveſted himſelf of his glory for a time, and mixed with mortals? "He ſuffered this from the hands

* I am ſorry to obſerve, that the *Influence*, which it is the chief purpoſe of theſe Pages to point out and to oppoſe, is not wholly confined to the *Writings* of the Clergy. For there are many among them, who, not contented with the real and ſolid praiſe ariſing from the faithful and zealous diſcharge of their Duty, as Paſtors, in the ordinary courſe, ſeem ambitious to catch the Applauſe of the Vulgar, by their popular allurements, and devout ſingularities.

of *men:*" (At whoſe hands elſe *could* he ſuffer it, if he purſued his gracious purpoſe?) "for whoſe whole race it was, that he had abaſed himſelf ſo low, and endured ſo much. He came down from heaven, and would be made man, for the ſake of men, who already owed their being to him; yet had broken his laws, were regardleſs of his Authority, inſenſible of his affection, and prepared to crucify him.

They indeed were enemies: but his love continued. *Whom he once loved, he loved to the end.* John xiii. 1. He created them to be good, and happy; and died for them when they were become wretched ſinners."

WAS it not the very reaſon of his dying, that they, as his fallen and ſinful creatures,

creatures, ſtood in need of redemption; and that *without blood* there was *no remiſſion?* The flatneſs and inſipidity, the triteneſs and tautology of theſe pompous reflexions, are ſcarce to be paralleled in any Writer, even of the loweſt rank,— I had almoſt ſaid, de fæce ROMULI.

THEN follow three or four Pages more, as little connected with the ſubject, and in the ſame ſtrain of vague declamation, ſupported by vague Quotations from Scripture. In ſhort, whether we conſider the reaſoning, the method, or the ſtyle of this Diſcourſe, I very much doubt (notwithſtanding ſome ſhining Paſſages) whether any man of real learning and abilities ever produced, and preſented to the Public, a meaner Compoſition.

AMONG the moſt uſual ornaments, or rather among the tricks, of a falſe Eloquence, is *the ſtudied and exaggerated Contraſt.* I mention it here, becauſe the fondneſs for this figure hath betrayed many of our Divines into falſe views, and wrong repreſentations of human Nature. A Paſſage or two in the beginning of Dr. OGDEN's firſt Sermon on the Sacrament will explain my meaning. After having ſhewn from the Scriptures the tranſcendent dignity of our bleſſed Saviour, in order to heighten it ſtill more, he thus deſcribes the condition of humanity.

" On the other hand, *Man* was fallen from that degree of earthly comforts and enjoyments, in which this Divine Word had placed him, into a ſtate of labor, ſorrow, diſeaſes, and death, by the ſin of

of our firſt Parents; and was alſo liable to the ſentence of eternal condemnation to be pronounced by the juſt judgment of Almighty God upon every *wilful tranſgreſſor*. *He* was in the poſſeſſion of unutterable glory and felicity; we were overwhelmed in miſery, and devoted to deſtruction."

THE great ſuddenneſs of the tranſition from one idea to another (viz. from *Original* to *Actual* ſin) creates ſome confuſion in the ſentiment intended to be conveyed. It is plain, however, that by *man*, we are to underſtand the whole race of men,—ADAM, and all his Deſcendants of whatever age, although Children, before they are capable of moral acts, cannot be *wilful tranſgreſſors*. But why are we thus puzzled with inconſiſtent, and contradictory Accounts of our com-

mon Nature?—for the ſake of the ſtriking *Contraſt*. "*He* was in the poſſeſſion of unutterable glory and felicity; we were overwhelmed in miſery, and devoted to deſtruction." Here we are hurried back with equal rapidity to the *former* idea: and what is this in reality, but the very quinteſſence of METHODISM—Original Sin, founded on Abſolute decrees? One would wonder that Scholars ſhould have recourſe to ſuch expedients for exciting devotion, becauſe *they* cannot but perceive, that where the diſparity between two Natures is infinite, all arguments againſt the worth of the inferior, deduced in the way of compariſon, are nugatory and childiſh.

IT would be eaſy to purſue this Enquiry farther. But as it is needleſs to multiply inſtances, I ſhall only obſerve in

in general, that obſcurity ariſes at times, in arguments too, which are obſcure in themſelves, from his Quoting Scripture, without announcing the intention for which he quotes it. The relation between the ſentiment advanc'd, and the paſſage which is brought to confirm it, is not always viſible of itſelf; and, in that caſe, if not pointed out, the conſequence is, that, inſtead of giving clearneſs, each communicates to the other additional obſcurity *.

UPON

* I have already ventured (in a Note to my Remarks, &c. No. 2nd) to give my opinion on the *ſtyle* of his Sermons, and ſhall now obſerve on the *matter*, or *ſentiment*, with the ſame freedom. Every one remembers the diſappointment that was expreſſed at finding *ſo little* in them, curtailed and reduced as they were, to near one half of the original number. The truth is, the Doctor had determined at firſt to be *popular*; and for this purpoſe he knew he could not well be too *diffuſe*. But being himſelf an excellent Scholar, and intending to print his Diſcourſes, he was ambitious alſo to be approved by Scholars. This induced him to deviate from his firſt plan, and on a thorough reviſal, to contract and condenſe his thoughts, as he found opportunity. But the conſe-

UPON the whole, I am ſtrongly perſuaded that a Treatiſe on Scripture-Quotations *, claſſed and character'd (if I may

quence was, that, leaning, at times, to oppoſite taſtes, his Sermons have not that conſiſtency of character which diſcerning Readers expected to find; and are leſs fitted, than they otherwiſe might have been, to pleaſe either the many, or the few.

As to thoſe on the Sacrament, although they are not without merit, and though he left a written Memorandum, that they might be printed, I wiſh, for the ſake of his reputation, that they had not appeared. For, after all that has been ſaid in diſparagement of his excellence as a Writer, it is ſtill true, and may be ſaid with equal conſiſtency and truth, that the greater part of his Sermons have abundant merit; and it is with real pleaſure I pay this tribute of reſpect to his Memory. A lover and encourager of learning, when living, he has left to the world a laſting monument of his learning and genius—a valuable Collection of religious Diſcourſes, original in their *manner*, and unequalled in their *kind*.

* So early as the age of ST. JEROM it was a practice even with authorized Teachers to drag the Scriptures into the ſervice of any Syſtem or Opinion, which intereſt or fancy might lead them to eſpouſe. That FATHER, who excelled in interpreting the Scriptures himſelf, in his ſecond Epiſtle to PAULINUS, written on purpoſe to recommend the Study of them, expoſes, with a juſt ſeverity, the licentious manner of Quoting and Applying them.—Nec ſcire dignantur (ſays he) quid Prophetæ, quid Apoſtoli ſenſerint; ſed *ad ſenſum ſuum incongrua aptant teſtimonia.* Quaſi

may riſque the expreſſion), according to their conformity with truth, propriety, and taſte, or their deviation from them, would be a curious, as well as uſeful performance. No one can doubt but that, when ſparingly uſed, and judiciouſly employed, they give to Diſcourſes great force and beauty. But the difficulty of employing them with propriety and effect, is much leſs attended to, than it ought to be, even by thoſe, who cannot but know it. There are few Paſſages of any length, which have not ſome reference to the cuſtoms, opinions, and manners of the remote times in which they were written; as well as to the characters and circumſtances of the perſons, to whom they were addreſſed: and the ſenſe of them often depends on the idiom of the origi-

Quaſi grande ſit, & non vitioſiſſimum docendi genus, depravare ſententias, & ad voluntatem ſuam, Scripturam trahere repugnantem.

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nal language, now underſtood only by ſcholars, and that not always, or not very clearly. Hence, what appears very ſtrange to us, and perhaps is unintelligible, might be eaſy and natural, juſt and proper in the higheſt degree. But imagine ſome general reſemblance between our ſituation, and that of the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, whether Jews, or Heathens; and in every other particular a total diſſimilarity: imagine the difference, which muſt neceſſarily be occaſioned by a tranſlation, faithful indeed in the main, but almoſt literal, in order to render it ſuch: imagine ſentences of the ſacred Books, pluckt from their natural order and connexion in the context; planted at random in Compoſitions, faſhioned, of courſe, to *our* taſte and manners; and preſented to the hearer in ſcraps and fragments—(whether to give a caſt

of piety to the piece, to favour the indolence of the Writer, or to cover his defect of invention, it matters not much)— imagine all this, then tell me ingenuouſly, whether there is any degree of confuſion, inconſiſtency, or abſurdity, which may not be juſtly expected from ſuch a proceeding? Yet ſuch a *habit* of Quoting Scripture have many contracted, that they do as almoſt as mechanically, and with as little thought or attention, as any act, which is purely inſtinctive, or rendered habitual by frequent repetition: while others quote it for the purpoſe of ſupporting their reſpective ſyſtems, or fanciful opinions. In one caſe, Errors, pregnant with miſchiefs of their own, and often connected with other Errors equally pernicious, are ſtampt with the ſeal of Truth: and in both caſes, the Scriptures, alike miſapplied, are deſpoiled

of

of their own native majeſty; while they disfigure and deform the Diſcourſes with which they are blended.

It is true, the *Prayers* of our liturgy, which abound with Scripture-Expreſſions, are both fine compoſitions, and true models of devotional taſte. But the nature of Prayer differs much from that of Diſcourſes; and the Art of compoſing the former, as well as the *taſte* by which it is governed, ſeems to have been gradually declining ever ſince the liturgy was framed. This indeed is the leſs ſurpriſing, when we conſider the gradual change in the national manners, which ſeveral cauſes have conſpired to produce, but none ſo effectually as a ſyſtem of venality, deſtructive of all principle, yet proof againſt all attacks. Nor muſt we wonder, as the ſenſe of excellence relates alike

alike both to *taſte* and *manners*, that there is a cloſe connexion and ſympathy between them; but ſhould keep a jealous eye on every abuſe to which either is liable, whether from negligence and inattention, or from art and contrivance. It is by no means uncommon for extremes to beget each other;—for religious enthuſiaſm to end in licentious manners; and for theſe, in their turn, to produce the former. In the courſe of our eventful hiſtory we ſee this very order and reciprocation of cauſes and effects. May we not therefore juſtly eſteem it an alarming ſymptom, if, in times like theſe, living Divines of acknowledged learning, and unqueſtioned worth, diſtinguiſhed too by the importance of their ſtation, have preſented the world with bulky Volumes of religious inſtruction, from the general caſt and ſtyle of which we are led to conclude,

clude, that piety cannot be maintained without the help of grimace, nor devotion be raiſed without inflaming the paſſions? Let us honour learning and worth wherever we find them. Let us promote piety by all prudent means. But inſtead of *extending* that influence, which METHODISM has acquired where it never had any right, or pretenſions to admittance, let us reſolve to confine it for the future within the limits of its own province, and proper juriſdiction—the Diſtrict of Dullneſs and of Ignorance.

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